

SPEECH-LANGUAGE LINKS

ISSUE 2

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*A Newsletter for Resource Teachers of the Deaf in the
Central and Southern Regions of New Zealand*

Hi everyone!

I hope all is going well with your students, and with the Annual Achievement Target work. It has been really great to see some of the work that is being done with this as I've travelled around the region. I'm looking forward to seeing the assessment results next term!

In this issue:

- ∞ notes from an article regarding our **current knowledge about the language skills of deaf students**
- ∞ **more ideas and activities for how to include semantic skills into your teaching** from RTDs around our region
- ∞ two more **great websites** that you might find really useful.



Deaf students' language skills:

I recently read a fantastic summary article entitled "Current State of Knowledge: Language and Literacy of Children with Hearing Impairment" by: Moeller, Tomblin, Yoshinaga-Itano, McDonald-Connor, and Jerger. [Ear & Hearing 2007 Vol 28, No. 6 pp 740-753.] The article summarises research findings in the areas of vocabulary, semantics, morphology, syntax, reading and literacy. *Liz will send you a copy of this article along with new resources to your host schools this week. If you would like a personal copy, request this from Liz (eguthrie@vanasch.school.nz).* Please have a read through it, as it has some really useful information for your work.

There are several interesting points that relate to this years' AAT that I thought worthwhile sharing:

- ❖ One study found a **bimodal distribution of vocabulary scores**, with scores below the mean and well-below the mean (similar to that found with our WORD-R Test scores). The authors suggested the low performers may have 'Specific Language Impairment' in addition to their hearing loss
- ❖ Another study showed that **phonetic and phonological delays influence vocabulary growth** in children with hearing impairment. This has direct implications for our work
- ❖ It was identified that there is **value in focusing on the processes and skills underlying vocabulary development**, as we are doing through our AAT
- ❖ The article states that **category formation helps children to organise & generalise knowledge, make inferences & remember what was learned**
- ❖ Some findings from research into semantic skill learning have shown that hearing impaired students often:
 - **required significantly more trials to learn target words** than their hearing peers
 - **were older than their hearing peers when they realised that new words spoken to them referred to objects they were unfamiliar with**
 - **were able to organise information into appropriate conceptual categories although performance with this decreased as the degree of hearing impairment increased**
 - had 'prolonged lexical access' suggesting that **hearing impairment may have an effect on lexical retrieval processes.**

The article goes on to say that "most of the research on poor readers in general...point to poor oral language abilities as the basis for reading difficulty" (pp 746).

Another important point was made in a different article “Organization and use of the mental lexicon by deaf and hearing individuals” by Marschark, Convertino, McEvoy and Masteller (American Annals of the Deaf 2004 vol 149, pp 51-61): that **although deaf students seem to organise semantic information in a similar way to hearing students, they often do not recognise when to use this information to help them in problem-solving tasks.**

This also has important implications for our work, suggesting that **not only do we need to teach our deaf students semantic skills, but we also need to be explicit about when to employ these skills.** One of the most effective ways of doing this is by **‘thinking through a process out loud’** thereby modelling how and when to use different semantic skills. You could encourage class teachers to do this, and to allow the students the chance to do this sometimes too.

Activity ideas:

One of the points made in the first article suggested that **phonetic and phonological information about vocabulary words is an important aspect for deaf students to attend to**, in order for their vocabulary to develop effectively. This means that when you are completing semantic webs, and in the course of revising new vocabulary, it is important to also **discuss the following features of the word:**

- ∞ the **number of syllables** in the word
- ∞ the **sounds it starts and ends with**
- ∞ any **double letters** in the word
- ∞ any **words it rhymes with**
- ∞ the **shape / length of the written word**
- ∞ any **smaller words contained in it** that the student knows
- ∞ **prefixes and suffixes** and what they tell us about the word.

We know that the more senses that students use during learning, the more easily they retain information. So, how about **jumping out the number of syllables** in new topic vocabulary, **writing the words in sand**, **highlighting smaller words or prefixes**, or **writing the word on a whiteboard and drawing the object around it?**

Gretchen Mark-Dear in Invercargill has successfully incorporated semantic skills work into her literacy work with her students. She has identified some words that her students over-use in their writing and has ‘outlawed’ them! The students are asked to write the ‘old’ word in the middle of a blank page. They then have to think of, or use a

thesaurus to learn, alternative words to use instead.



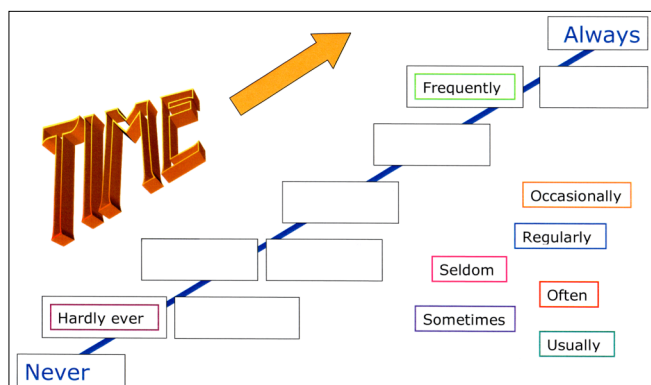
By doing this, the students not only work on **synonyms**, but also learn a range of **new verbs**, work on **tenses**, learn how to make their **writing much more interesting**, and learn **how to use a thesaurus!** Any words that the student finds during their reading, get added to the list also! Gretchen pins a few of the pages to the wall, for the students to refer to, and after a few weeks replaces them with new ones.

I could see that the students really enjoyed this. As another activity to help the students understand the meanings, **we then turned the words on this page into a cline** (see previous S.L. Links for an explanation of these). This helped the students get a good idea of the ‘speed’ involved with some of these new words. Fantastic! Thanks Gretchen!

David Bayley from Feilding has made some great activities to use on the computer with his students. Students always seem more motivated when technology is involved! One of the activities he has designed focuses on synonyms related to the class topic at the time. **He has made Word documents using text boxes that the students drag and place beside words with a similar meaning.** As long as he remembers to click ‘Don’t save’ at the end of each session, the pages are ready to use again with the next student.



He has made a similar page for **clines**, where the students click and drag words along the line. He has used this for **developing adjectives of size and adverbs of frequency**.



The students love manipulating words on the screen, and David even sends some of these activities home for homework on a memory stick! What an awesome way to engage the students in their learning!

Another idea David uses is to play vocabulary noughts and crosses. A 9 square grid is drawn and David writes 9 new topic words into the grid. Before anyone can mark a square s/he must explain / categorise that word. The first to get 3 in a row wins. For younger students David uses pictures in the squares. He says that one of his students enjoyed this game so much he wanted to make a grid 10 x 10 squares and play 'connect 4'!! That's great!

Thanks for those cool ideas David. If anyone would like a copy of the Word documents David has made (so you can see how to make your own), please email me. I'm sure these ideas can be easily integrated into whatever topic work the student is doing in class.

Olympic Games Topic:

Speaking of class topics, I know the Olympic Games will be a topic many of your students will be studying in class at the moment, so I thought I would include some ideas on how to integrate semantics work into that topic.

For younger students it is worth talking with the class teacher and negotiating the important points that your student needs to focus on. My suggestion would be that they need to get an overall idea that the Olympics is about lots of people, competing in lots of different sports, and if they do well they will win a medal. That's a **broad definition of the Olympics**. If the student ends the

topic with a good understanding of that, and is **maybe also able to name 3 – 5 sports involved**, and possibly also knows that the **best sports people from different countries compete**, then that would be great! I feel that time spent talking about details like the torch ceremony, and national anthems, really doesn't add much of significant value to their understanding, and may only confuse them.

Include lots of linking to the students' own experiences such as participating in sports day competitions at school, holding a 'mini-Olympics', or even just the games they play with their friends at lunchtime or in Phys. Ed. **Younger children need a broad understanding of competing in sports to base other knowledge on.**

Activities at this level might include:

- ∞ **physically competing in games and drawing up basic charts** of point-scoring, time keeping, or maybe distances
- ∞ **defining 3 – 5 different sports**
- ∞ some artwork around **making a medal** while talking about it **and defining it**
- ∞ participating in and then **describing an award ceremony**
- ∞ **standing on a podium and talking about the different heights** for 1st, 2nd, 3rd
- ∞ **looking at a globe** and finding New Zealand, and a few other countries s/he might have heard of



- ∞ **talking about why our athletes wear black and comparing with Australia.**

Intermediate level students and older could be extending their knowledge of Beijing, some of the other countries that have hosted the Olympics, how often they're held, the medals table, and who some of our athletes are.

Activities at this level might include:

- ∞ comparisons (between sports or between athletes, or maybe specific comparisons and updates of the medals table)
- ∞ descriptions (of Beijing, different sports)
- ∞ definitions of topic vocabulary such as: podium, hurdles, award ceremony, semi-final, world-record, marathon, pentathlon
- ∞ discussing synonyms (e.g. win, succeed, triumph, prevail, achieve, victory, accomplish...)
- ∞ making clines of 'speed' or 'distance'
- ∞ understanding categories of events e.g. 'track and field' vs. 'gymnastics' vs. 'equestrian' and the different events in each
- ∞ listing antonyms for concepts around speed, time, distance
- ∞ describing why some athletes are nervous about competing in Beijing
- ∞ comparing Beijing to their home town
- ∞ giving explanations of how to e.g. pole-vault.

Of course, there will be other language goals aside from semantics work that can be incorporated into these same activities e.g. expanding knowledge and use of adverbs of time, regular and irregular past tense verbs, compound and complex sentence structures, giving an explanation of how to play a sport, and so on! If you have any questions, or any other ideas on how to focus on any language skills, please email me!

Margaret Hunt (VADEC library) sent this great website with lots of information on China – Beijing and the Olympics.
<http://en.beijing2008.cn/>



COOL WEBSITES:

David Bayley has found a website that outlines a great software tool called 'kidspiration'. Check it out at:

www.inspiration.com/productinfo/kidspiration/features/index.cfm

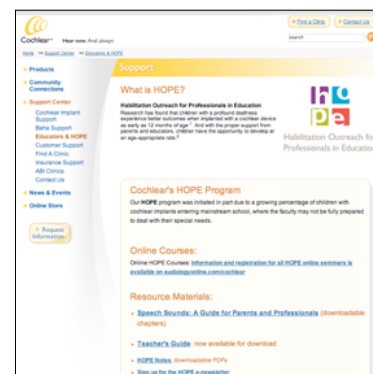


This software package is designed for developing visual graphic organisers to help children with their learning. It looks like an excellent resource. You can download a 30-day free trial too! Thanks again David.

Nan Gardner from the University of Auckland recently alerted me to a new resource for working on speech sounds. You can download sections for many speech sounds, and the units are 'family friendly' with great ideas for working on the sounds at home. Go to:

www.cochlearamericas.com/support/291.asp & click on 'Speech Sounds Book'. Thanks Nan!

Well, that's it for another issue. I hope you are all managing to keep safe and dry, and that the flooding around the country is not affecting you too much!



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